

Of Blood and Beasts

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Summary: Following the exploits of the newly graduated Huntresses of Team SKRA (Sakura). Please review!

1. Prologue-Vytal

Disclaimer:I don't own anything but my OCs and the Plot. Everything else is Roosterteeth's. (Same for all chapters). Also, if you prefer to read on AO3, here's a [/works/6608380/chapters/15119512](https://www.fanfiction.net/work/6608380/chapters/15119512)

"You know, we were beginning to think you wouldn't make it in time, Sakura," Rae (pronounced Ray) said, taking another bite of her fish sandwich.

"Yeah, yeah," Sakura replied, taking a seat next to Rae, across from their teammates Aoi and Koral

Koral was currently delving into a veggie-burger, relishing in the new tastes. Aoi was completely occupied with her scroll, her lizard-eyes lit up with texts and articles.

"I really wish you got hear earlier though. There are some pretty interesting places around here." Rae said after swallowing, her yellow cat ears twitching.

"I got held up on the trip here. Every policeman in every village on the way here just had to check my weapon permits every time," Sakura groaned, unclipping her katana from her belt and setting it up against the wall behind her.

"Maybe you should just come with us on the airship if you don't like having to deal with so many people," Koral commented with her mouth full.

"Ha," Sakura chuckled, "I'd still rather walk. So anyway, are you guys ready for tomorrow?"

"I think we're as ready as we'll ever be." Rae said, continuing to eat her sandwich.

"I highly doubt that we'll have to fight tomorrow. The odds are definitely against it," Aoi said, not taking her eyes off her scroll.

"And if we do fight tomorrow?" Koral asked.

"We'll just give it our all. If we don't win this year, oh well. Not the end of the world," Sakura sighed.

"Says you. Just don't loop me into the doubles round again. You know that I don't like to fight," Aoi said, finally looking up from her scroll and adjusting her glasses.

"Hey, it's not our fault that Rae and I got injured in the team matches." Koral remarked.

"And you and Sakura still won," Rae quipped.

"If my sister is the one doing the fighting, its easy to see why we won. The only reason she lost the singles last year is that her opponent didn't let her get close," Aoi commented. "If she had carried a sidearm, like I told her seven times to do so, she might have won."

"Sis, you know guns aren't my style." Sakura replied.

"'Style' should not take precedence over function," Aoi snapped back, "You lack any form of ranged attacks."

"And you lack combat skill and experience," Sakura said back, her sister starting to get on her nerves.

"I'm a scientist and a researcher. You know I only decided to become a huntress as it removes many restrictions placed on civilians." Aoi retorted, snapping her scroll shut.

"Hey, chill out you two!" Rae interrupted. "Saki," she continued, calling her partner by her pet name, "you know your sister detests combat. And Aoi, you know Sakura doesn't always do the thing most people would call logical. So how about you both agree to disagree? At least until we graduate?"

Aoi huffed and opened up she scroll again, before muttering "fine."

Sakura leaned back and nodded her head in agreement.

Rae sighed in relief and set down the remnants of her sandwich. "I swear I've been barely keeping us together for the past four years."

"You're not wrong," Koral agreed.

The team sat in silence, other than Koral's munching, for a minute before Sakura stood up.

"I'm gonna go for a walk," she said, grabbing her sword and hooking it to her belt.

"Really? You just got here though. Can't you stay just a little longer?" Rae asked, a little sad her partner was leaving not long after she arrived.

"Yeah. You know I get stir-crazy easy." Sakura replied, adjusting the scabbard so her katana sat parallel to the ground along the back of her waist, setting it in a small hook to keep it in place.

"It's literally been five minutes," Koral deadpaned.

"Yeah, but I haven't been to Vale before. I wanna get a look around," Sakura said, making her way out the door of the sandwich shop.

"You at least know how to get to the hotel, right?" Rae asked.

Sakura replied by giving a thumbs up as she went through the door.

"You keep beating around the bush, Rae," Koral said.

"My sister isn't the best at interpreting body language. You'll just need to say it outright to her," Aoi commented, her focus now entirely back on her scroll.

"I know," Rae sighed to herself, her ears drooping down.

It was fairly late at night, around 8 o'clock. The sun had already set an hour back, so the only thing lighting up the sidewalk were the streetlights and storefronts. A few stars shined up in the sky, many blotted out by the light of the city.

Sakura sighed to herself and pulled a pack out of a pouch on her right hip. She pulled a cigarette out of the pack and put it between her lips. Replacing the pack, she pulled out her lighter and lit her cigarette, before replacing the lighter as well.

She took the cigarette out of her mouth and breathed out a puff of smoke.

"Thank Dust for the company that makes these things. None of those gross chemicals that kill you," Sakura spoke to herself, replacing the cigarette made of a blend of dust, tobacco, and an edible binding agent back in her mouth.

She made her way down the street, taking turns and alleys as she went, not worried about where she went.

Sakura had just taken a turn down onto a street filled with shops as she felt her scroll vibrate in her black trenchcoat pocket. She pulled it out and read the text.

'Hey, you okay?' - Rae

Sakura sighed before typing back.

'I'm fine. I just needed a walk.'

'You seemed steamed. Did something happen?'

'No. You don't need to worry about me so much.'

'Alright. Everyone is at the hotel right now. Just, be here by 10, okay?'

'I'll try. I think it's pretty close by. I'll talk to you later.'

Sakura put her scroll in her pocket and looked in the nearest shop window, which happened to be an ice cream shop. Inside, seated at the bar, were two people she recognised, and two she'd never seen before.

She walked in and approached a certain blonde monkey-boy and his suave, blue-haired compatriot. She placed her arms on their shoulders, which gave them quite the scare.

"Didn't expect to see you two here. How's it goin' guys?" Sakura said, cigarette in her mouth.

"Sakura! I thought team SKRA wasn't gonna compete after last year?" Sun said.

"Like hell we are," Sakura chuckled, "not gonna lose this year."

"I should introduce our friends. Two more are on the way, but this is Weiss and Bla-"

The door opened behind them again, letting in two blonde brawlers and a redheaded reaper.

"Blake!" Yang yelled, then noticed the rest of her friends, "how'd you guys end up here?"

Yang took a seat next to her partner, and her father next to her. Ruby followed suit, sitting next to Weiss.

"We knew you were going to head here. Tai actually told us to come here." Blake said.

"Dad! Why didn't you tell us you set us up a party like this? But also, how did you get their numbers?" Ruby squeaked.

"You left your scroll on the dinner table, and it started exploding with texts from your teammate." Tai explained.

"Well, if this is a private party, I guess I'll just take my leave then," Sakura said.

"It's fine. You can chill with us," Neptune said.

Sun leaned back a little to let his friends are the new addition to the group and spoke, "Guys, this is Sakura, the leader of team SKRA. She's from Haven, and a-"

"Fourth year who was the runner up in the Vytal Festival last year!" Ruby squeaked, "can I have your autograph? Pleeeeease?"

"Umâ€|sure, uhâ€|" Sakura said, prodding Sun for a name.

"That's Ruby. The blonde over there is her sister Yang. This guy's their dad. Then there's Blake and Weiss," Sun said.

"Is she, smoking?" Weiss asked.

"Yes, and before you ask, it's clean. Don't worry about secondhand," Sakura replied, tired of having to explain it so many times.

The owner of the shop now came walked in from the back, carrying a tray full of many different ice creams, setting each one down in front of one of the patrons.

"It's on me, guys." Tai said, putting his lein card down on the bar.

The shopkeep took the card and rang it up at the register. "I heard you say those are clean, so you can smoke in here for now, since you're with them, but do you have a permit to carry that sword?"

Sakura put her hand on the inside of her coat and pulled out her ID and another card with 'PERMIT' printed on it. She showed them before sliding them back into her pocket.

"So, are you gonna order something or are you just gonna stand there?"

2. Fight the NITEs

(I know this chapter sucks. It was really rushed and the next will be better)

She stood in front of the mirror, cigarette hanging lazily out between her lips. Her short, white hair hung over her forehead, the pink highlights shimmering in the light. She threw the two tails of her metre long ponytail over her shoulder.

"Hey, you ready?" Rae called from outside the bathroom.

"Yeah, I'll be out in a second!" Sakura called back.

She set her cigarette out of her mouth and set it next to the sink and splashed water into her face. She dried her face with a paper towel before putting the cigarette back between her lips.

She stared herself in her eyes and spoke. "Showtime."

"Welcome to the second match of the annual Vytal Festival tournament! In this match we have last year's runner ups, the Mystral Wind Elites, Team SKRA! Versus the rising stars, Team NITE of Atlas!" Port said over the PA.

"This is quite a spectacular matchup indeed! We have a highly decorated and diverse team of Huntresses, versus a highly disciplined and coordinated team of greenhorns. This match is truly anyone's game, don't you agree, Professor?" Oobleck responded.

"Indeed, now without further ado, the match will begin in 10," Port began.

"Hope you guys are ready to face the quadruplets. We won't go easy on you!" One of team NITE said.

"Alright, listen up. They've all got shields and armor, so we gotta be fast and precise," Rae started, and closed her mind to focus.

"9, 8, 7,"

Rae's mind reached outwards and touched their opponents, and she listened into their thoughts.

"6, 5, 4, 3,"

"Guys, watch out, they're gonna-!"

"BEGIN!"

All four of NITE rushed forwards and flashed in light. All of a sudden, their numbers doubled and they struck.

Aoi used her water to create a barrier around her and froze it solid.

"You'll have to try harder than that to-"

The ice shattered and Aoi went flying as a rocket struck the base of the ice. Aoi hit the litter barrier and the buzzer sounded.

"And right off the bat, one of the Wind Elites is disqualified!" Oobleck called out.

'Guys, forest! We need to split them up!' Rae said telepathically to her teammates.

"Not a bad idea," Sakura said, and they ran off into the wooded biome behind them.

They split up, Koral laying traps as they went. Rae took to the trees, and Sakura stood still, her hand on the hilt of her blade.

"Fan out, and find them!" They heard as the knights approached.

BOOM!

An explosion sounded and a buzzer sounded twice.

"It seems as though we have a double knockout! Koral Trapper and Nile Knight have both been taken out!" Port announced.

"There she is!" A Knight called, spotting Sakura. Four surrounded her, and she slowed her breathing.

"She's not doing anything. What do we do?"

"I dunno? Just take her out!"

One lunged, and Sakura slipped the blade out of its scabbard and appeared behind him. She swung and slammed the flat of the blade against his back, which smashed him against the ground. His aura depleted from the powerful strike, his clone dissipated. A buzzer sounded right afterwards.

"Holy hell! I'm gonna-"

Sakura flash-stepped behind him, and slid the blade next to his neck.

"You forfeit?"

"Not even a chance!"

An explosion rocked the area as a grenade exploded, sending all three flying. Sakura's back slammed into a tree, popping some of the vertebrae. The buzzer sounded again, and she fell face first into the

"Owwwwwwwww" she winced, holding her side, "think a broke a ribâ€|guess I'm-"

"And now team NITE is down to one! It seems the element of surprise is on the Dragon's side. What a show!"

"How is my-" Sakura checked her aura on the scoreboard, and found her aura hardly above the minimum.

"And now it seems that Rae Weaver is about to-"Port began, and the entire audience winced and groaned.

Then, five seconds later, the buzzer sounded.

"And Team SKRA wins! Can someone bring him some ice?"

"I can't believe he wasn't wearing a cup!" Koral laughed.

SKRA was in the locker rooms, cleaning up after their match.

"Hey, it was the only place without armor. And, in my defence, he left it wiiiiide open," Rae said.

"It was still rather unsportsmanlike," Aoi commented.

"Sure, but did you SEE how he went down? The poor guy was like a ROCK," Koral chuckled.

"At least I didn't get stuck in my own trap-"

"At least I didn't get eliminated in the first five seconds-"

"Both of you, chill," Rae said, "Saki already decided her and I are moving on to the doubles, right?"

The three looked towards their team leader, who began coughing hard into her arm. When she pulled it away, it had blood splattered on it.

"I'm fine. Don't worry about me."

3. Block and Parry

"Sakura!" Rae yelled, and shot to her partner's side, "are you okay? Aoi! Get over here!"

"I'm fine, I'm fine. I think I must have just broken a rib or something," Sakura replied as she coughed up blood once more.

"You shouldn't be coughing up BLOOD, though! And why haven't you used your aura?" Rae snapped.

The amount of blood wasn't an issue, no more than a few speckles, but it was enough for the golden cat to panic.

"I've been using it gradually over time. It'd rather not stress my aura right now," Sakura replied, coughing again.

"She's had worse. I wouldn't worry too much about it," Aoi claimed.

"She could have really bad internal bleeding, or-"

"I'm fine," Sakura said, putting the hand of her non-blood speckled arm on her partners shoulder.

This was followed up with another coughing fit, and when Sakura checked her arm, no more blood had appeared.

"See? I'm fine, Rae. No need to worry," Saki said, showing off her arm.

"Okay, but I don't want you to-" Rae started.

"I'm fighting in the doubles. This is the last chance we'll get before we graduate. I'm not letting this chance slip out of our hands again," Sakura interrupted.

Rae began to interject, but reasoned with herself and sighed. "Okay," she said, "but if this happens again, I don't care if I have to drag you out by the hair, you're not going to fight. Okay?"

"Fine," Sakura said, "Now come on, my mom texted me. Food's on her since we won."

~Several Days Later~

"Welcome to the third match of the doubles round of the Vytal Festival Tournament!" Port's voice boomed across the stadium, "in this matchup, we have Dinn Ram and Nico Stric from team DINN of Shade, versus the crowd favorite, the East and South winds of the all Faunus Mistral Elite, Rachel "Rae" Weaver and Sakura "Dragon" Ryosuke of Team SKRA!"

The crowd roared as the two duos entered the arena. Rae waved towards the crowd as she went, and Sakura walked along with her hands in her pockets.

"Would it kill you to wave for once?" Rae asked through her smile, "and would you please put that cigarette out? You're setting a bad example for any kids watching."

"Fine, but I get to smoke in the hotel room later,"
Sakura

"Deal."

p The ground shook as biomes came climbing up from the outer ring. Glacier, desert, volcano, and a swamp. The countdown

"Hope you two are ready to get your asses whooped," Dinn called from the other side of the

"You ready for this?" Rae whispered, pulling her signature pistol, Prism, out of its

"You bet your ass it is," Sakura said, unsheathing her katana and holding it in a defensive stance.

"BEGIN!"

Sakura sped forward in a flash-step, and struck at Dinn quickly with the flat of her blade. She had expected the blow to hit and stun the poor boy, but found her blade caught between two daggers with large, flared crossguards.

"Not bad, but I saw how you fought last match. Seems you're pretty useless without this," Dinn smirked, and twisted his arms, pulling Saki's sword out of her arms and tumbling across the floor.

"Well, sheeiiiiittt!" Sakura groaned as she had to backstep to avoid being stabbed.

"Uh, Rae? A little help over here!"

"I could say the same!" The cat's voice replied.

Sakura glanced over to find her partner having difficulty landing a blow on her opponent, as every punch and kick she threw was blocked by a tonfa.

"Your time is over, you dirty animal!" Nico yelled.

"WHAT DID YOU JUST CALL US?" Sakura snapped angrily.

'SWITCH!' Rae telepathically said to Sakura.

She gladly obliged, flash-stepping under her partner and landing an open-palmed strike right in Nico's abdomen.

Rey had now slipped past Dinn and grabbed Sakura's blade, Swift.

"Catch!" She yelled as she haphazardly tossed the dangerously sharp blade.

Sakura snatched it from the air and laid a swift strike in front of her, slicing her opponent's right tonfa in two.

"You little-!"

Nico pointed the long end of her remaining tonfa at Sakura, and pulled a trigger on the handle. Pellets shot out of the end, and Rae lept in the way, activating the holo-shield on her left arm.

It absorbed all of the attack, but overloaded and discharged the excess energy as electricity, shocking Rae.

Sakura slipped past and struck Nico across the chest with the blunt end of her blade, knocking the wind clear out of her.

Sakura then spun Nico around and kicked her into her teammate, sending them both careening into an open fire geyser. Sakura took the cigarette she had "put away" and tossed it into the geyser, and the dust in it caused flames to blast out from the crater, eliminating both opponents.

"Unbelievable! It seems that we have a double knockout! Congratulations for team SKRA for their fourth round 2 win!" Port's voice echoed as the crowd erupted in applause.

Sakura made her way over to her teammate and held her arm out.

"Did we win?" Rae asked, her hair sticking up straight off her head.

"We sure did," Sakura replied.

Rae grabbed her partner's hand, who hoisted her up before she collapsed into her shoulder.

"I think my shield is fried. And I don't think I'll be able to go into round three, either. It's all you, again," Rae quipped.

"Don't worry. Let's just get you in a bed, then we worry if your hair will ever go back to normal," Sakura chuckled.

"Wait, what's wrong with my hair?"

4. Bloodshed

Several Days Later, as Beacon is under attack~

"All right! Listen up! CP put me in charge of this operation. You need to secure points Alpha, Bravo, and Charlie! Air support is crippled so don't expect any help!" Terra yelled through the dropship. "Use anything and everything at your disposal! Helping civilians is a secondary objective; no one will come out of this alive if we don't eliminate the threat! Understood?"
>"Hoo-rah!" The soldiers yelled.
"SKRA here will be giving fire-support but they will be operating independently. If you need their help, call it in and I'll relay it to them!" She said as she pulled down a manual release for the dropship doors. "Now go and give them hell!"
>Soldiers poured out of the dropship, followed by SKRA. Terra pulled Rae aside and hugged her. "Stay safe, okay baby?"
"Okay, ma. I'll do my best." Rae replied.

>She hopped out of the ship as it took off back to the city. Rae pulled out her pistol and checked her gear. Her holo-shield had a crack through the main jewel.
"I think we should go around and try to thin out the Grimm. All these soldiers and underclassmen are getting torn up! They won't last much longer at this rate!" Koral called to Sakura.

>"The question is, will we live?" Aoi responded.
"We won't do much if we concentrate all our power in one spot, but if we go alone we'll be torn to bitsâ€¦" Sakura said to herself, lighting up a cigarette. "We'll split up, 2 and 2. Aoi and Koral, go the the south side. Rae and I will take the north."

>"Got it. Be safe out there!" Koral called, nocking an arrow and running southward, Aoi in tow.
"You okay Rae?" Sakura asked.

>"Yeah. It's nothing. Probably just nerves." Rae replied as a shiver went down her spine.
"Alright, let's go."

>*Ten minutes later*<p>

"Freeze!"

>Rae held up her pistol at the group, aiming at the individual in the center. They were standing on a rooftop of one of the dorms
"Surrender and I won't shoot!"

>"How cute. She actually thinks she can beat us! Just one girl!" Mercury said. "Permission to take care of her?"
"Granted," Cinder said coldly, "but make it quick."

>Mercury immediately kicked at Rae, firing of several rounds.
She jumped back, using her booster pack to move more quickly, and deployed her holo-shield just in time to block the incoming fire. She was momentarily stunned from the sheer force of the attack, which Mercury used to close the distance.

>He jumped and dropkicked her in her right arm, dislocating her shoulder. She howled in pain, but was able to switch her firearm to her left hand and fired two armour-piercing rounds into his ankles.
Both collapsed on the roof, Mercury struggling to get up, the joints in his ankles torn to shreds. Rae raised her pistol to fire at the Queen, but was struck in the left shoulder by an arrow. Cinder strutted towards her, and draws her black sword out of thin air.

>"This arm has cost me now, so I'll be taking it." She slashed downward, severing the arm below the elbow. Rae screamed in pain as her severed forearm fell off, the wound glowing with a bright, white-gold aura.
She fell silent in shock as pain shot through her body. She looked up at Cinder, tears streaming down her face as the Queen prepared for another swing. The blade streamed downward, and Rae closed her eyes and decided to accept this fate.

That didn't come.

She opened her eyes to see Sakura standing above her, katana drawn, blocking the blade. She kicked Cinder back, and sheathed her blade, preparing to fight using Iaijutsu.

>"Back off, you bitch." Sakura growled coldly, a look of pure anger glowing in her eyes.
Cinder gave a look of disgust towards her new adversary, and summoned shards of glass and sent them careening toward her enemy. Sakura's blade flashed out of its scabbard and deflected every one, except one that struck horizontally across her on in her left cheek. That hit drained the last of Sakura's aura and left a deep wound in its place.

>"Too scared to fight me where I can hit you, huh?" She taunted, seemingly unaware of her injury.
Cinder lunged forward, and the two engaged in a dance of blades. Rae felt her aura slowly draining, and jammed her right arm into the ground in an attempt to fix her shoulder. She put all her weight into it, and felt her shoulder go 'pop!'

>Fighting through the pain, she grabbed Prism, and looked up, just in time for her world to come crashing down.
Standing there was Sakura, stiff as a board. Through her chest was Cinder's sword, cutting straight through Saki's right lung. They both stood their motionless, or that's what it seemed like to Rae. She felt her heart fall into despair immediately. Every second felt like an eon, and each moment filled with pain.

>Then, without warning, Cinder ripped her blade free, slicing the wound up even more. Blood flew everywhere, coating the roof with red splotches. Sakura collapsed to her knees and coughed up blood, her cigarette falling out of her mouth, stained red. Sakura then fell into her chest, her face toward Rae. Saki's eyes were wide open, her pupils dilated. Blood trickled from her open lips.
"SAKURA!" Rae yelled as loud as her body would allow. She dropped Prism and began to inch towards her fallen partner.

>"If you want to be with your friend, who am I to deny you?" Cinder quipped, and kicked them into a hole in the roof. The pair tumbled down to the ground as Cinder and her posse moved on.
Rae clambered toward her friend, and began sobbing uncontrollably.

>"I'm so sorry, Saki. Iâ€¦Iâ€¦
Sakura weakly raised an arm up, and placed a finger on Rae's lips.

>"I don't want to hear it. You have nothing to apologise for," she spoke softly, "just stay alive."
Sakura promptly closed her eyes, and fell limp.

>"Saki? Come on, don't do thisâ€¦" She whimpered, trying desperately to keep her partner with her, "stay with meâ€¦pleaseâ€¦I need youâ€¦"
Rae got her answer when Sakura began convulsing and coughing up more blood.

>"She's alive. But I need to keep it that way. Need toâ€¦stop the bleedingâ€¦" Her vision began to blur.
"No..not nowâ€¦I need tooâ€¦"

>Then everything went black.<p>

5. Loss

Rae shot up into a sitting position after snapping awake. She looked around and took in her unusual setting. It was very dark, and she was in a bed in what seemed to be a dorm room, with another bed hanging precariously above her on ropes. One bed was placed up against the wall, blocking the window, but with a small crack of light shining in the room. A dresser was blocking the door.

>She remembered what had occurred before she passed out and grabbed at her left arm. It was properly bandaged, with gauze and cloth. She looked around the room again, seeing many amenities strewn about the room. It was difficult to see due to the poor lighting, but she could see another bed on the other side of the room. Her eyes adjusted, and she could see someone in it.
"Saki!" She called as she quickly moved to get out of the bed, tumbling to the ground. She got to her feet, feeling a semi-hard yet sticky substance in parts on the carpet. She paid it no mind as she made her way over to her comrade and collapsed into the bed.

>"Sakiâ€¦" She spoke softly, "thank dust you're alive."
She could see Saki's chest, covered in bandages, the place where the cut was

still bloody. It was slowly rising and falling as Sakura breathed. Rae heard her breathing clearly with her cat ears, and it calmed her immensely.

>"It seems we're okay for now. Ha. We're 'okay,'" Rae chuckled to herself.
She pulled herself up off the bed and tried to get her balance. Her missing forearm made it difficult to balance, but she shuffled her way over to the nearest nightstand. On it was Prism, several unspent dust rounds for a pistol, and a note with a pen.

>She leaned up against the table and examined her weapon. She moved to check the magazine, but ended up dropping the magazine into the floor. She bent down to pick it up with her left arm, then realised it wasn't there.
"Ha. Guess I forgot I lost my fucking hand." She said to herself, gritting her teeth. She took a deep breath to calm herself, and placed Prism back on the table. She grabbed the magazine and checked it. Fully loaded.

>She sighed and replaced the magazine and began to look at the note. It was scribbled hastily in black ink, with tears staining the paper. Several droplets of blood also dotted the paper, as well as a bloody handprint in the top corner.
"If you're reading this, then please get this note to-" the name was illegible due to tears bleeding the ink. "And if you're one of those girls I dragged into my dorm room, please, get this to her. Tell her I'm sorry. I'm sorry I left. I'm scared. Scared of him. But you were hurt, and it's my fault,-" the name was again illegible, but this time by blood," I didn't want to get you involved in this. I thought he would leave me alone. I was a fool, and it cost both of us. I'm going to fix this. Just please, don't hate me. You and Ruby, and Weiss. You are all I have left. Please, Yang. Forgive me."

>Rae began to feel dirty reading the note, seeing as the body of it wasn't meant for her. She turned her attention back to the room and found Sakura's coat folded up on the ground next to her sword. She hobbled her way over to the coat and picked it up. She looked closely at it, expecting to find a blood lined hole where she was cut, but there was none. She flipped it over and a small charm fell out of the interior chest pocket.
She laid the coat down next to its owner and picked up the charm. It was a small wooden one, in the shape of a rectangular prism, with a chain extending from one end, and a metal container on the other. She attempted to pull it out, but was unable to due to her current condition. She turned her attention to the wood, which was inscribed with burn marks that formed symbols that looked familiar.

>"Is thisâ€|?" She asked herself, "Kanji?"
She put the charm back in the pocket and felt something else in it. She pulled it out, and it turned out to be Saki's scroll. She extended the screen and checked it's battery.

>"Three percent. Okay. I can work with this."
She began dialing her mother's number and called, but as the call was picked up, all she could hear was static. She hit the scroll against the table and the static cleared a little.

>"Hello? Hello? Is this Sakura Ryosuke? If you can hear me, please respond," a male voice spoke.
"This is Rae Weaver! We need help! We're stuck but safe, although we can't fight."

>"Alright, can you describe your location?"
"We're in some dorm room, and there is a bed blocking the window. Is my mom there? I really need to hear her voice."

>"Specialist Terra Weaver is KIA. Her gunship was taken down by the dragon."
Rae dropped the scroll to the ground. As it did, the battery died.

>"Damn it. No. Not again. Anything but that. Not AGAIN, DAMNIT!" Rey

sobbed as tears began streaming down her face. She turned to Sakura.
She grabbed at her severed arm and climbed into the bed with her partner. She snuggled up to Sakura and hugged her tightly. Her tears dropped on the bandages, staining them.
>"Sakura. Please. Stay with me. You're all I have left now. I can't lose youâ€¦ I can'tâ€¦ I can'tâ€¦ I can'tâ€¦"
She kept repeating the phrase over and over again, tears refusing to stop, until her body finally caved into the shock and she passed out.

6. Rescue

Sakura opened her eyes slowly, adjusting to her new location. She found herself on a bed in a trashed dorm room, with one side of her much warmer than the other.

She looked down to find her partner embracing her tightly, as if clinging to her for dear life. Tears stained her cheeks, and she was asleep. Her chest was rising and falling gently as she breathed.

Sakura tried to get up, but collapsed back on the bed as she felt a sharp pain in her chest. She grabbed at the pain, finding her chest covered in bandages.

She fell short of breath, struggling to breath. Taking deep breaths, she calmed herself down.

"Come on, now, don't let this stop you," she spoke to herself, forcing herself to sit up.

She hissed in pain, but was able to get her back up against the headboard. She felt a liquid in her lung and began coughing uncontrollably. Blood trickled out between her lips, but not any amount to be worried, compared to the amount she lost earlier.

Rae's eyes flicked open, and she stared deep into Saki's pink opal eyes. She seemed to mouth something before lunging and clinging to Sakura in a deathgrip. Tears flowed like rivers from her eyes, her breathing erratic from the sobbing.

"You're alive." She squeaked out between fits, "I didn't lose you too."

"Too? Rae, what happened? Where are we?" Sakura questioned.

"I didn't lose youâ€¦ I didn't lose youâ€¦" Rey chanted as if in disbelief.

"Heyâ€¦ I'm okay. Can you tell me what happened?" Sakura calmly asked, placing a hand on Rae's shoulder.

"You nearly died. I tried to help but I passed out. Someone helped. Doesn't matter. Didn't lose you too." Rae spoke in brokenly.

"Hey, everything's gonna be okay." Sakura said, trying to comfort her best friend.

"I've lost everythingâ€¦ not losing youâ€¦" Rae chanted, her sobbs getting heavier.

"Hey, Sunshine, you're not making any sense." Sakura said, using a name only she called Rae, and she snapped out of her chanting.

"She's gone, Saki. My other mom is dead now. I have no one left but you." Rae said, burying her head into Sakura's chest, tears welling up with a passion.

Sakura set her chin down on Rae's head and wrapped her arms around her. She gently rubbed her back before speaking, "I didn't know I meant that much to you. I thought you were just messing around. I'm sorry for not noticing."

"I don't care about before. What matters right now is that I can't lose the last person in this world who I love." Rae said, her tears seeping into Sakura's bandages, mixing with the blood.

Sakura was speechless. After a moment, she willed herself to speak.

"I didn't know you felt that way about me, Sunshine."

"I do. And I can't lose you. Just, stay with me. Please. You're the only reason I haven't decided to give up on this goddamned hellhole of a world," Rae poured her heart out, "I fell for you the moment you we became partners. You always protected me. Always. And now you nearly died because of me. It's all my fault. I shouldn't have tried to stop them. It's my fault that I lost my arm, and my fault that you nearly lost your life. It's all my fault."

Sakura grabbed Rae's chin and tilted it upwards. Rae's wide, gold orbs were shining with tears. Her tears had left marks down her face, and her cat ears were flat against her shimmering short wavy locks. She looked like a sad child, weak and vulnerable, looking for someone to just hold her and tell her everything was going to be okay.

Sakura closed her eyes and leaned her head down, pressing her lips against Rae's. Rae seemed shocked, but it quickly transformed into happiness as she closed her eyes and reveled in the feeling. She began crying again, but not of sadness.

The blood on Sakura's lips left a metallic taste in her mouth, but it was also oddly sweet. It might have been her imagination, but Rae didn't care. Everything could have collapsed around them and she would have been oblivious.

Sakura broke the kiss, taking a deep breath, and broke the trail of saliva between them with a finger that was then placed against Rae's lips, the other wiping her tears away.

"No more crying, okay?"

Rae grabbed the finger with her remaining arm and pulled it off her lips and made it cup her cheek.

"Okay."

"Are you sure you're okay to be up and about?" Rae asked,

worried.

"Only one way to find out," Sakura said, hoisting herself up, using the nearby table to support her weight. "Hand me my sword, would you?"

"Yeah, of course," Rey replied, leaning down off the bed and grabbing Sakura's katana, handing it to her partner.

Sakura grabbed it and planted the bottom of the scabbard against the ground. "Sorry old pal, but I need you to help me stand rather than keep others on their knees. I hope you understand," she whispered to the blade softly.

"It's nothing. Just a little tough to breath," Saki said, beginning to walk around the room until she began to walk without using her sword. Shortly thereafter, she began to collapse.

Rae lept forward, grabbing the warrior and helping her back up to feet. "You shouldn't exert yourself so much!"

"I never got anywhere just laying around. I'll never recover fast enough unless I force my way to do so," Saki said, taking deep breaths.

Rae's ears perked up as she heard a noise at the door.

"What is-"

"GET DOWN!"

Rae shoved Sakura roughly to the side onto a bed, snatched Prism off the table and took cover next to her friend.

The door came crashing down, sending both it and the dresser blocking it flying back, hitting the bed and sending splintering wood everywhere.

"STAY BACK! OR I'LL SHOOT!" Rae yelled, fearing a Grimm or White Fang member had found them.

"What a harsh welcome for the mother of half your team," a familiar voice said, accompanying an older female with dark grey hair with black, horizontal stripes going through it, walked through the door.

Rae immediately lowered her gun, breathing a sigh of relief.

"No problem. What I wanna know is why you're here, mom," Sakura replied.

"Ironwood sent me to recover some things. Everyone thinks you two are dead, but I know that my girl can handle anything life throws-" she stopped mid sentence, "Dustâ€|what happened to you Sakura? And you as well, Rachel?"

"Some hag and her crew decided to pick a fight with Rae. Whenâ€|I had to intervene. This is what happened because of that," Sakura said.

"I'm just glad I didn't find your corpses instead," the woman said.

"Can you help us get out of here Mrs. Ryosuke?" Rae asked.

"Please, call me Tabby, hon. And I'll be damned if I left you here. Can you guys walk?"

"Just barely," Sakura said getting off up off the bed.

"And don't you two worry about the rest of your team. They were evacuated in time before Beacon fell," Tabby remarked.

Rae grabbed Saki's coat and helped her put it on, followed by helping her get her sword harness on. She then did the same, putting on her jump-pack, followed by her knee and elbow pads, and leg armor.

"I found your other arm, by the way, Rae. It was chewed up by some Grimm, but this was still intact," Tabby said, pulling out a small yellow jem-like bauble with a white lining around it. "It's all that was left of your holo-shield. It's not like you could use it in your current condition."

"Thank you!" Rae said, a tear falling down her cheek, before she placed it in a pouch on her belt.

"Now we need to head to the tower. It shouldn't be too far away," Tabby said, pulling her rifle off her back.

"Won't it be dangerous? Especially with us slowing you down?" Rae asked.

"No. Steele is in a heavy Paladin on the other side of the tower, drawing some attention. As long as we don't take more than a couple of hours, we should be able to ride it to get out of here," Tabby replied, checking outside the room for any Grimm. "Come on, let's go."

_ The trip to the Tower was uneventful, other than the bloody and mangled corpses of students and soldiers that dotted the path. The smell was sickening, and the sights didn't help. Many bodies were no longer identifiable, other than the scrolls that were found with every body.

As they neared the tower, Sakura was finally able to walk on her own, and to Rae's dismay, pulled a cigarette out and lit it as she walked in.

"I don't think it's a smart idea to start smoking when you're injured like this," Rae said.

"It's a coping mechanism. It might do her body some good, actually; make it think not much is wrong, making it heal faster. Couple that with aura, and I don't think it's much to worry about. Now come on. Get in." Tabby said, entering an elevator with a hole in the roof.

The two followed suit, each taking corner.

"Hang on, I'm going to switch to auxiliary power," Tabby said,

pulling off the elevator panel and poking away at the wires.

Soon, the elevator began to drop, albeit slowly. After several grueling minutes, they stopped, and exited into what seemed like a massive vault. The walls were so high you couldn't see the ceiling, although that may have just been because that only the emergency lighting was on.

"What is this place?" Rae asked, looking around.

"Hell if I know or care. I've only been down here a few times. This way," Tabby said.

A few minutes later, Tabby rushed them into a side room and whipped out her assault rifle.

"Stay here, girls. There's some Grimm up ahead," she said.

"I can fight," Sakura said, before Rae grabbed her arm.

"No, you're not. You need to conserve your energy and rest," Rae snapped.

"Well, I'm-

"Your partner is right, Sakura. Stay here. I should be back soon.

_ Not much longer after Tabby had left, she returned, carrying a long thing wrapped in cloth, about the size of a small person. They made their way back encountering no resistance on the way.

They entered the elevator, and Tabby tinkered with it to get it moving again. As it arrived at the top, and they began to leave the building, a massive alpha beowolf clawed through the doors at them.

"Damn," Tabby said, and put a finger to her ear, "hey, can you-

A massive Paladin, larger than a normal one, came crashing by, pulverising the beast into the ground, before turning on a swivel and taking down a small back of beowolves with a heavy machine gun.

"Never mind, hon. You got 'em." Tabby said, walking outside and into the hand of the Paladin, which grabbed her and put her into a second cockpit above the first.

"Just walk into its hand. We're going to Vale. There's a safezone there," Tabby said through some speakers in the Paladin.

Sakura hoisted up Rae and walked into the open hand of the Paladin, which picked them up and put them on a large container in the back of it, before taking off down the road.

_ It was a rather short drive to the Vale safezone. The entire city looked like a warzone now. Collapsed building everywhere, bodies in the streets, even the road was torn up.

The Paladin stopped and bent down, allowing Sakura and Rae to exit.

"One other thing. Not sure if it's good or bad news, but we got a message from the headmaster at Haven before the CCT went down," Tabby said, getting out of her cockpit, "under this state of emergency, team SKRA has been promoted. You are all now Huntresses."

"You're kidding right?" Rae questioned.

"Nope. And the headmaster gave you your first mission as well; to stay here in Vale and assist Atlesian forces however they need it," Tabby said.

"We're not ready!" Rae said.

Sakura set down Rae on a nearby bench as they overheard a conversation in nearby.

"I know that! But if we don't capture or eliminate those commanders, the White Fang may regroup and strike us! We won't have the resources or manpower to fight both the enemies at the same time!" "We don't have the men to spare!"

Sakura made up her mind. She leaned down and kissed Rae on the forehead.

"I'll be back soon," she said.

"No, you can't. Don't." Rae said, tears attempting to flow, but she had no more. She tried to grab after her, but tripped and fell.

Sakura walked away towards the feuding officers.

"Go away kid. Evacuations are that way," one of them said.

"Where did they go?" Sakura asked.

"Excuse me? I told you to get lost." The officer snapped again.

"I'm a huntress. If you can get my partner over there to a place to stay here, I'll take care of your little problem," Sakura said.

"And why should we- oh, fuck," the officer said, turning to see who was harassing him, and recognising her.

"They went north, out of the city a small village. We don't have the-"

"Keep her safe," Sakura said before walking right past the officer.

"Sakura!" Rae called, worried for her partner.

Sakura responded with a thumbs up as she walked northward.

7. Attack and Return

It was near midnight one nearly a week after she left for the village. She had stopped at the inn for a drink and a room, as well

as to eavesdrop for information about her target at the bar. She was too well known for her own good, however.

"Hey, you. We don't take kindly to your kind here," one of the men, clearly drunk, said.

"Back off, old man. I'm just here for a drink," she replied.

"And I'm here to whip your faunus ass to the curb, you disgusting piece of shit," the man slurred.

"And why do you think I'm a faunus?" The girl questioned, trying to convince the man of a lie to avoid a fight. Attention is the last thing she wanted right now.

"You got that faunus stink on ya. Probably from rolling around in your own shit, you animal!" The man threw a punch.

The girl reached down at her waist and pulled the hilt of a blade up, which the man's fist connected with, sending him recoiling in pain. The girl knew what was inevitable, and took several bills out of her black coat and put them on the bar.

"Sorry for the mess in advanced, barkeep," she said, and got up.

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING? KILL THE BASTARD!" The man yelled.

One of his friends drew a combat knife from his belt and attempted to stab her. She slipped to the side grabbing his hand. Another man tried to punch her from behind and she moved the knife in the way, causing the man to stab his friend in the hand. In the fray, the girl's hood flew off, revealing her identity.

"Fuck! It's the dragon!" The first man yelled. He took out a pistol and grabbed the nearest woman, who happened to be a faunus as well, and put the gun to her head.

"You're gonna walk out, right now, and get the fuck out of town or I blow this trash's head off!" The man threatened.

Sakura put her hand on the handle of her sword, and seemingly teleported behind the man, and sheathed her blade again with a click.

"Taking a hostage after picking a fight? That's low. Even for a thug like you." She said.

"You bitch!" He yelled, and tried to pull the trigger, but his hand didn't do anything. In fact, his hand slid off his arm and landed with a thud on the ground before he screamed and passed out.

Sakura left the bar, and saw a man running into an alley out of the corner of her eye, dressed in white and black. She chased after him and ducked into the alleyway, only to find herself face to face with the barrel of a gun, with several others behind it.

They were all White Fang. A full-face mask denoted the commander; that was her target.

"Time for the dragon to meet her end," the commander said, before he found himself impaled from behind by a shining blade.

"But how did you—" he struggled.

"You forgot this dragon has a semblance," she ripped the blade free, releasing the dead commander to the ground.

"If you leave now, I'll forget you were here. If you don't, you'll end up like your commander here," Sakura warned.

The henchmen dropped their guns and ran, ditching their masks as well.

"And now for the trip back. I hope Rae isn't too mad at me—" Sakura said, pulling out a cig and lighting it.

She cleaned her blade on her coat, the blood absorbing into the fabric and disappearing, before sheathing the blade and starting her trip south.

Sakura arrived back in Vale around sunset, nearly a week and a half after she had abruptly left her partner in order to take care of a mission. She felt bad about it, but she was getting extremely stir crazy. Sakura could only go so long without walking the wilds, and she needed to get her tastes of freedom when she could.

Sakura looked up towards the orange sky and took a deep breath, a cloud of smoke leaving her lips as she exhaled. She removed her cigarette and gave it a flick, knocking loose ash from the end that got caught in the wind.

She continued her walk to the residential district, where Aoi had told her to go after Atlas had gotten a small communications Beacon working that functioned like a localized CCT. It wasn't much, but it allowed scroll communication within its broadcast range.

Eventually, Sakura had made her way to the address that Aoi had sent her several hours before. It was the location of an apartment that Atlas had given to Rae as payment for Sakura's mission.

It was in the middle of the now much larger safe zone that had now encompassed most of Vale, except for a few hotspots of activity. The area where Rae was now living in was spared from most of the destruction, and Atlas mechs, now unarmed, were cleaning up rubble across the city.

Sakura made her way up the stairway in the complex, avoiding the elevator, until she got to the fifth, and room 636. She put her scroll up against the doorknob until she heard the telltale click of the lock disengaging.

She walked in without warning, as she knew Rae wasn't there. Aoi was keeping close tabs on her due to her current health, and was currently checking up with her.

The apartment was larger than most, as the landlord had previously used it as their own room, and had torn down the adjacent room for extra space. They had also renovated the room to have a larger bathroom, as well as a small dining area and a rather large king-size

bed.

"Not a bad place," Sakura said as she unclipped her harness and tossed it aside against the nearest wall.

She kicked off her boots and tossed them with the harness, followed by her gauntlets, gloves, and socks. She slipped her coat off and put it on the rack close to the door and stretched her arms up over her head.

She immediately felt arms grab ahold of her from behind, and a head rest on her shoulder. Left hand was cold, and made of metal, but it was exceptionally gentle.

"You should have told me you were here! I would have met you at the edge of town!" Sakura's hugger said.

"You're not mad at me for leaving so suddenly?" Sakura said, turning around. "Of course I'm mad, but I'm happy you're back okay more than anything," Rae said with a smile.

Sakura lowered her right hand and gingerly grabbed ahold of Rae's new prosthetic arm.

"When did you get this?"

"A few days after you left. I used what was left from your mission on it, so I hope you're not mad at me for it!" Rae replied.

"Naw, as long as we have a roof over our heads and something to eat, I'm not mad," Sakura said.

Rae smiled and grabbed Saki's right arm, come on, you must be hungry, right? Let's get something to eat."

She sat Sakura down in one of the chairs and opened up the oven. Pulling out a pizza, she set it down on the counter and grabbed a pizza cutter with her left hand.

"I didn't think any pizza shops would be open this soon after what happened," Sakura said as Rae began to cut the pizza.

"It's been over a week, and the market district wasn't hurt very hard. Not to mention the relief coming from the other kingdoms," Rae said, finishing cutting the pizza, "This was actually a gift. I tried to refuse it, especially since we didn't help much, but the owner wasn't going to no for an answer."

Rae picked up the pizza and set it on the table, and the handle of the pizza cutter snapped in two.

The two sat in silence for a moment, both in surprise of what happened.

"Oops," Rae said.

Sakura burst out laughing, and Rae just looked at her.

"What's so funny?" Rae asked, as if nothing happened.

"You just broke the handle of a steel pizza cutter with no problem! And the only thing you say is 'Oops.'" Sakura chuckled.

"Hey! I'm getting better with it!" Rae pouted.

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't be laughing,"

Sakura said, calming herself down.

Rae sighed, and the two ate their pizza in relative silence. After they were done, Sakura asked Rae, "so, the weather huh?"

It was now Rae's turn to start laughing.

"After all this time, all you have to say is about the weather!" She chuckled.

"You know I'm not good with people things," Sakura said.

Rae stood up and put her dishes in the sink, followed by her partner doing the same. As Sakura did so, Rae hugged her from behind again.

"I know. And that's one of the things that made me fall in love with you," she said, "you're always honest, and you don't know how to hold back. You always go things full-force, and you don't stop."

"Raeâ€|"

"I just want you to know how much you mean to me. I never want you to change who you are. No matter what happens, no matter if we were both bleeding out far away from each other, I just want you to know I do, and always will, love you."

"I love you too, Rae."

Rae froze. "Wait," Rae said, "did you justâ€|"

"Hey, I really didn't think I'd end up with someone who cares as much for me as you. You really changed my mind on things."

Rae held her partner tightly, and began sobbing quietly.

"I thought I said no more crying?" Sakura said, turning around.

"I know. I just never thought-"

Sakura put Rae's metal hand up to her lips and said, "shhhhâ€|" Before we do anything else, I need to shower."

" Yeah, you do."

8. Blood

Sakura shot awake in a cold sweat. She began to take several deep breaths before wiping the sweat off her brow.

>She looked around to find herself in bed in her and Rae's shared apartment. She calmed herself and put her head in her hands.
"The

hell..." She spoke softly as not to wake her partner.
>"The same dream every other day since Beacon fell..." She said getting up. 'I need to clear my head,' she thought to herself.
She scribbled a note down on a piece of paper and set it down on the nightstand. Getting dressed, she grabbed a glass of water and placed it next to the note and stepped outside.
>She walked down and out of the building, and lit a cigarette before beginning to walk down the sidewalk.
It was pitch black outside, with the shattered moon in full view. Trying to remember her dream, images flashed through her head, all tinged by a deep red. She collapsed to her side into the side of a nearby building.
>Sakura began feel a burning inside of her, but her skin was cold as ice.
"The hell is wrong with me..." She said, taking out her scroll.
>She attempted to dial her sister to no avail, it only went to voicemail.
"Damn..." Sakura said, knocking ash off the butt of her cigarette.
>She shifted herself into a more comfortable position against the wall and began to focus again. The images flashed through her head again and she was able to identify a few before a sharp pain made itself known in the back of her head.
She lunged forward onto her knees and began coughing uncontrollably. Blood splattered onto the concrete from her mouth. It was a darker color than normal, an almost unnatural red. Her cigarette had fallen out, the butt stained with blood.
>After a few moments, she recovered and got to her feet. She felt lightheaded and her limbs give in shortly after. She tumbled down onto her side, her sword scabbard scraping the sidewalk.
"What...hell..." She muttered to herself unable to move.

>Her vision was blurry, but she saw someone clad in a black cloak with a black mask looking at her with bright green eyes looking at her. The figure stared at her before promptly disappearing into thin air.
"SAKURA!" a voice called but it sounded as if Sakura's head was underwater.
>She was flipped over to find Rae overtop her, her face plagued with worry.
"Are you okay? Can you hear me?"
>Sakura tried to respond, but her blood began to boil, literally. Her body flushed red.
"Come on, stay with me!"
>Rae began to pull Sakura up in an attempt to move, but to no avail.
Almost immediately as Saki's symptoms appeared, they vanished.
>She threw herself against the wall and regained her balance.
"Sakura! Are you okay?"
>"I think so...the hell happened?"
"I don't know, but something is wrong. Your note had blood on it, and you wrote stuff in blood everywhere."
>"Wait, what? I don't think I cut myself..."
"We need to get you to bed. I'll call Aoi when we get back," Rae ordered, taking Sakura's arm and throwing it over her shoulder.
>"I tried calling her but she wouldn't pick up," Sakura said.
"How? You left your scroll on the counter, and there was blood on it as well."
>"I don't remember any of that...how..." Sakura said, confused. She tried to remember when pain shot through her body, and images flooded her mind.
Her body convulsed and blood trickled out of her mouth.

>"Sakura!" Rae said, but it was muffled, like something was dulling all of Sakura's senses.
She heard a whisper in the back of her head, the pain spiking with every syllable. "...follow the

blood...seek the dragon's den...embrace the it...or it will consume you..."

>Sakura promptly blacked out, her body racked with pain.<p>

9. Awakening

Sakura opened her eyes slowly to see a see a worried Rae looking over her, her eyes moist from crying. Saki began sitting up, and grabbed at her head.

>"What happened to me?"
Rae lunged forward and hugged her, refusing to let go. Sakura returned the hug and looked around. She was in their shared apartment, and there were blurry red marks on the wall in some places.

>She noticed a glow coming from the kitchen counter, and found Aoi standing there with some of her lab equipment, feverishly typing away on a laptop.
Rae let go of Sakura and pulled her into a deep kiss instead. After a short time, much shorter than Sakura expected, Rae broke away and wiped the tears from her eyes with her good arm.

>Aoi looked up from her laptop and walked over to her sister. She took out her scroll and opened up a notepad application.
"Rae, I'm going to need you to leave the roo-"

>"It's not happening," Rae interrupted.
"I need to maintain doctor- patient confi-"

>"It's fine, sis," Sakura said.
Aoi sighed, "I need you to go over what happened with me."

>"I got up in the middle of the night from a dream, and didn't feel well. I figured some clean air would clear my head. While I was walking, I felt dizzy, and stumbled over. There was this pain in the back of my head. Then I collapsed, and started to cough up blood. The pain got worse, and I could swear I heard voices," Sakura explained as Aoi began typing everything up.
"Do you remember anything about the dream?"

>"Not much. It was more like a nightmare, but I can only remember the color red."
"Now, when you heard voices, did they say anything?"

>"There was something about following blood, and dragons. And it said to 'embrace it.'"
Aoi stopped typing and looked up. Her eyes showed a worried emotion, something she never showed.

>"Are you absolutely sure they spoke of blood and dragons?"
"Yeah, but-"

>"Head southeast to Mountain Glenn. Alone. Enter the crater formed by the Dragon Grimm when it broke free. If you don't do this, whatever is in your blood could kill you," Aoi said coldly, closing her scroll and getting up.
"Wait, what are you talking about?" Rae asked, shooting up off the bed.

>"I recently received an anonymous note regarding this exact scenario. I did a little digging in our family history, and what Sakura is experiencing is asymptomatic of a rare condition in the Ryosuke lineage. There are no medical records of it, so I'm conducting an investigation into it," Aoi said, packing up her equipment.
"You're joking, right?" Rae asked in disbelief.

>Sakura felt a sharp pain in the back of her head again, accompanied by a distinct voice.
'Blood...feed us...blood...or we feed on you...'

>Sakura lurched forward, and coughed up more blood.
"SAKURA!" Rey yelled, grabbing her lover, "Aoi! Do something!"

>"There's nothing I can do. I've given you medication to help deal

with the wooziness and disorientation, but I can't help with this. Just remember what I said," Aoi said coldly, walked out the door and closing it behind her.
Rae grabbed a glass of water and some pills off the nightstand and had Sakura take them.

>"You're not seriously thinking about going there alone, are you?" Rae questioned.
"What other option do I have?"

>"Stay here until Aoi can come up with some sort of cure!"
"My sister gave her cure. I'm going to head to Mountain Glenn," Sakura said, getting up out of bed.

>"You're crazy! I'm not going to let you go! I'm not going to lose you!"
"Then let me go," Sakura said, looking Rae straight in her eyes, "I can feel something eating away at me. I'm not going to sit around, and I'm also not going to put you in danger."

>"You're going to get yourself killed! And then I'm going to fol-"
Sakura shut her up by locking lips and holding her closely. She broke it after a few seconds and spoke, "I'm not going to die. Not when I have something to come back to."

>Rae sniffled and took one of her earrings off. It was a simple teardrop shaped topaz stone on a silver hook. She reached up to her girlfriend's ear and put it on one of the piercings Rey made her get.
"Isn't that-" Sakura started.

>"One of the earrings my ma gave me the last time I ever saw her. She always wore them. Maybe whatever protected her, and then me, will protect you too."
Sakura smiled and gave her one last peck on the cheek before turning and leaving out the door, grabbing her pack as she went.

10. Mountain Glenn

"So this is Mountain Glenn, huh..." Sakura said to herself as she saw the mountain loom over the ruined cityscape.

>She took her cigarette out of her mouth and flicked it, sending ashes floating through the air. The butt was stained red, but Sakura put it back into her mouth anyway. She had gotten used to the metallic taste.
Sakura made her way through the ruins, slicing any Grimm that stood in her way. After many if their brethren were vaporised, many began to back off.

>Along the walk Sakura suffered from many coughing fits. Blood splattered on the ground with each one. Her mouth was colored a deep red.
She now stood at the foot of the mountain, it's formal gentle slope now a steep ascent. Sakura stood fast and climbed upward. Her hands became bruised and cut, but her injuries faded soon after she got them.

>An hour later, she heaved herself on top of the rubble that the dragon had cast aside when it awoke. In the massive crater was what seemed to be an altar, with images of monsters carved into the rock around it. They seemed to move and breath as Sakura approached.
As she neared the altar, the pain in the back of her head spiked, and she collapsed into the ground. She began to vomit, blood mixed into the bile. She regained her composure and got back on her feet.

>In front of her was a figure clad in shadows, with a black mask and bright green eyes showing through.
"Who the hell are you, and why are you following me!?" Sakura growled, fed up with her condition, and this person's ties to it.

>The figure stood their, silent, and reached their right hand back over their shoulder and grabbed a handle. They pulled upwards and whipped their arm forwards, before placing their hands together.
In her hands was a simple black steel katana.. Its blade was worn and chipped, and rust dotted its surface.

>Sakura drew her sword, and took a defensive position. Her opponent held out their hand and gestured for Sakura to attack. Sakura charged and slashed forwards, her blade bouncing off her enemies odachi. Her challenger seemed to move with a near inhuman speed, and swept their blade out in front of them, grazing Sakura's chest, and hit the blade with such a force it snapped in two.
Sakura strafed around her opponent until her back was to the shrine. Using it as a wall, she made it difficult for her enemy to attack with their massive blade.

>Sakura struck forwards and landed a blow on the mask, slicing it in two. The figure rushed forward and slammed into Sakura, sending her tumbling into the shrine.
She landed in a sitting position and tried to use her left hand to push herself off, but it slid into a hole in the stone. Something clasped onto her tightly as she tried to remove it, and Sakura struggled to get free.

>With one final tug, she ripped it free, only to find her arm forearm encased with a strange gauntlet. Broad, octagonal metal rings wrapped around what seemed to be wooden housing.
Sakura looked at her enemy, who seemed to be waiting for her to attack.

>She shook her arm, getting a feel for the new weight, and the rings spun around. They eventually stopped and spikes shot into her arm. Pain spread like cracks in glass through her body, and she fell to one knee.
She began to feel as though her blood was being sucked out of her body, and her mind began to clear. After small time, the spikes retracted, and the rings spun back into their original places.

>"The hell, all the pain and cloudiness is gone..." Sakura said in shock, looking at her arm, "who the hell-"
She looked up to find the figure standing above her, the blade of the katana against Sakura's neck.

>"Even if your mind has been cleared of the bloodlust, you still need to pay attention," they said in an elderly voice.
The figure, now obviously an elderly woman, withdrew the blade and grabbed Sakura's left arm. She slid the sword through a gap between the rings, straight through Sakura's arm.

>She braced for pain, but it felt like nothing more than a pinch. After the entirety of the blade was through, the woman drew it back through, and the blade looked completely different.
It was shimmering, as if freshly sharpened. The edge looked as if it had never been used and the rust was all gone.

>"Ketsueki kinzoku," the woman said, removing the scabbard off her back and placing the odachi in it.
"Blood metal?" Sakura translated.

>"Indeed. Rarer than dust. Its existence is nearly just a legend. Forged from the bones of a dragon, and cooled in the blood of man. It's the signature weapon of the carrier of the Blood," the woman said, placing the sheathed blade in Sakura's hands, "its name is Ketsu. Use it well."
"Who are you?"

>"Me? I'm just a lonely hermit that lives in this mountain. But if you must know, my name is Kimina. Kimina Ryosuke. I'm surprised you don't recognize your own sensei."<p>

11. The Dragon Rises

"So, have you been having any problems getting used to the arm?" Aoi asked, typing up her patient's previous responses on her laptop.

>"Just a couple mishaps here and there. It's either not applying enough force, and I drop things, or too much force, and I break

things in two," Rae replied with a sigh.
"Have you been taking the medication I prescribed you for that blood pressure?"

>"Yes, one in the morning, one at night," Rae replied.
"Alright, you should be good for a while now. Come check up in three weeks, or whenever something is--"

>Aoi's phone buzzed on the counter, interrupting her.
"I really need a secretary," Aoi mumbled to herself before picking up the phone.

>"Hello, this is Dr. Aoi Ryosuke. Do you need to set up an appointment?"
Rae could just barely make out the voice on the other line. I was somewhat gruff, but fatherly.

>"Yeah, I was hoping that you could please--"
"Mr. Xio Long, this is the third time you've called this week. I told you I'm not a therapist. I--"

>"Can you please just recommend one, or are if you know anyone that could help..."
Aoi glanced at Rae for a moment before returning to her conversation.

>"If I send someone will you stop interrupting my appointments?"
'Erm, yes..."

>"I'll send someone over right away."
Aoi promptly hung up and tossed her scroll in the counter before returning to her laptop.

>"Rae, you're going to Patch."<p>

"Uuuughnnn...sooo coooold..." Rae whimpered to herself as she trudged through the snow.

>Even though she was wearing a thick, wool undershirt, underneath a yellow turtleneck sweater, all wrapped up in a thick, white winter jacket, she was still shivering.
"I wish that I asked for better directions than just 'follow this road, it'll lead you there.'"

Ugh...I never should have let Aoi bribe me into this. I'm never gonna let her bribe me with salmon again...but maybe sushi..."

>Rae's personal monologue was interrupted when she saw a group of four early-academy age students walking on the path towards her.
'Hey!" Rae shouted, waving her gloved hands to get their attention.

>She made her way over to the party, shaking all the while.
"You seem cold," the orange haired girl in the group said, before being silenced by a jab in the ribs from her green compatriot.

>"Hello, is there something I can help you with?" One of the group asked, a young girl, clad in red.
"Is anyone from around here? I'm looking for someone," Rae asked.

>"That would be me. I'm always happy to help!" The girl gleefully exclaimed.
"I'm looking for the residence of a," Rae started, pulling a note out of her pocket, "Taiyang Xio Long?"

>"Uuuuhhhh, do you mind me asking why?"
"My friend, a doctor, kept getting calls from him to send someone to talk to his daughter of something. So I'm who she sent," Rae answered.

>"Oh, then just keep following this road for a mile or so. It'll be the first one you see," the girl said.
"Thank you!" Rae exclaimed, "sorry if I bothered you! I'll be one my way now!"

>Rae passed by the group and continued down the road. She could hear the group talking behind her, but couldn't make it out due to her head being wrapped up in a heavy scarf with a hood covering it.
Rae stopped in her tracks, however, when she heard something loud snapping off in the distance. She threw off her hood and scarf, and focused her attention on the direction of the sound, from the northeast.

>Another snap, followed by a second and a third, each getting closer. Then she heard the roar.
There was no mistaking it. There was a

Grimm approaching, and a big one at that.

>She turned to the group she passed and chased after them.
"HEY! GET DOWN! SOMETHING BIG IS-"

>A figure, no larger than a person, came flying across the path, and slammed a curved sword into the ground, slowing them to a stop.
The figure was clad in a black coat with a white lining, with an odd looking black-steel gauntlet on their left arm. Their head was covered by a black hood, their face obscured with a black White Fang mask, with larger slots for the eyes.

>Soon after, a jet of fire followed after them. The warrior lept out of the way, only to have a basilisk-like creature leap out of the woods and attack them.
The basilisk roared, and the gals between its scales began to flow with what looked like lava. The snow melted around it, and any nearby plant life shriveled away rapidly.

>The warrior, completely oblivious to the group of people in the area, got back up and stretched. Their coat was in tatters, with the long tail burned up in many places. Their breathing was heavy, Rae could hear it from over twenty yards away.
The lizard clambered it's way over to the swordsman and snapped with its jaws, just as they jumped over it, slicing into its back. The beast roared and swept it's tail, knocking the warrior beyond the trees.

>"What is this thing?!" The blonde knight yelled.
"It's some kind of Grimm!" Rae yelled back, "we need to-"

>The black coated fighter flashed back and sliced the Grimm again. Large, black, leathery wings had extended out of the swordsman's back, through two slots in the cloth.
The warrior charged again, only to have the monster roar and spit fire directly at them. They careened toward Rae, and tumbled across the ground.

>In the chaos, their mask came off and hood flipped back, revealing their identity.
"Sakura!?" Rae yelled.

>Saki snapped out of her battle-trance and looked at her partner, a look of shock on her face. Her wings immediately folded back under the coat, trying to hide them.
"Don't worry, we'll talk after this!" Rae yelled, pulling out Prism.

>"Don't even try! Conventional weapons won't work on it! You need to-"
The Huntresses where immediately cut off as several explosions were heard, and turned to find the group of students attacking the monster.

>"Buy me a little time, I need to get this ready!" Sakura called, to which Rae nodded and joined in on the fray.
Their bullets and explosives did nothing to the beast but anger it. The shrapnel was melted down and absorbed by the heat.

>"All right, don't let me down on this one, teach," Sakura said to herself, and pulled her charm out of her pocket and wrapped it around the Ketsu. She then ran the palm of her hand across the blade, slicing it, and covering the surface with blood.
Sakura closed her eyes and then threw her left arm away to her left, and the rings on the gauntlet spun. When they stopped, needles shot into her arm, sending pain everywhere in her body.

>Then she felt as though there were chains holding her that were suddenly lifted. She felt freed. Her mind was cleared of everything but one deep, unfaltering instinct.<p>

"~Kill~"

Sakura's eyes shot open, glowing a pure, undying red. Her gauntlet and sword changed from a pitch black to a stark white, now resembling the bone plates of a Grimm itself.

>Her wings flew open and she shot forward. She let her body do whatever it wanted. She let her instincts have absolute

control.
Everything around her was a blur except for the basilisk. Her prey. It was in the finest of detail. Every color was grotesquely bright, every crease as large as a canyon, every ridge a mountain range.

>Gliding overtop from its head, Sakura cut a clear line from head to tail. As she landed, she forced her mind back into power and threw her arm to the side again.
The rings spun and stopped, and the needles retracted. Sakura's eyes returned to their dull opal, and her armor darkened back to their usual black.

>She then collapsed, stabbing Ketsu into the ground and using it to hold herself up. The adrenaline rush slowly faded, and she began to cough up more blood. The bright red liquid shown clearly on the snow.
Her previous injuries made themselves clear, blood dripping from cuts that had soaked through her coat. Burns on her arms and legs tingled like pins as the cold air brushed against them.

>everything seemed to lose color around her before she finally collapsed from exhaustion.<p>

12. Rest

A/N: New chapters of this story will go up first on AO3; here's a link:

</works/6608380/chapters/15119512>

"Are you sure it's okay for us to stay? I don't want to intrude, and I don't think Sakura would either..." Rae said, not moving her eyes off her partner.

"It's fine, it's fine. Just let me know if you need anything," Taiyang replied, "if you have a moment to talk to my little Yang I'd appreciate it. She's in the next room over."

"Thank you, Mr. Xio Long," Rae replied, getting off her chair and bowing.

"Please, just call me Tai. I'll be in the other room," he said, taking his leave from the room.

>Rae glanced back at her partner, who lay on the bed that Taiyang had graciously let them use.
Rae had removed the blood stained clothes and set them aside, with a black steel chest-piece the beast had coughed up in its death throws, and Sakura's gauntlet.

Her gentle breathing calmed Rae, a reminder that she still had something to live for. Sakura's wounds had already begun to heal at an alarming rate. It was as if she wasn't human, of even faunus. Another thing that concerned Rae was how Sakura changed when she landed the killing blow.

Sakura's mind was completely blank, overwhelmed by a primal, near monstrous desire. But as soon as it happened, it faded.

>Rae pushed the thought out of her head. No use worrying about it now. Sakura was okay, and they could talk when she woke up.
The blonde cat made her way to the room Taiyang had said his daughter was in. She knocked gently, before asking, "Hey, is it okay if I come in?"

>No response.
"I'm going to come in, okay?"

>Rae opened the door and stepped inside to find the brawler near

motionless in her bed. Her eyes were dull and sunken, and it seemed as if sadness was clinging to her. Rae immediately felt herself fall into a grief she had almost fallen prey to herself. She knew the feeling, and she didn't want anyone else to have to go through that.
"You're Yang, right?"

>Both stood still for a time, before one of them broke the silence.
"Yeah. I am. What do you what?" Yang said harshly.

>"Hey, I just want to talk-"
"Well there's nothing to talk about! So why don't you just leave!" Yang yelled.

>Rae stood there and braced herself. She used her semblance to tap into the mind of the crestfallen huntress. She was careful not to peer too deep, but it wasn't hard to see what was wrong.
"Well? Get out!" Yang yelled again, her aura flaring.

>"No. I'm not leaving," Rae said calmly.
"And why not? I don't know you and you don't know me! I don't want to see another faunus in my life, so just LEAVE!"

>"No," Rae said again, "If you don't want me here, do something about it."
Yang screamed and lept out of her bed, and threw her left fist at the stranger in her room.

>Rae made no attempt to block or dodge, and didn't let her aura protect her. Yang's fist connected squarely with her jaw, before the brawler slipped and fell.
They both stayed still for a while, before Yang began sobbing uncontrollably.

>"Why don't you listen...you have no idea of what I'm going through..."
"Actually I do," Rae said, and held out her left hand, "I know exactly what you're going through."

>Yang looked up and grabbed the metal hand, and Rae helped her get back up and on her bed. Rae then took a seat on it next to her.
"You've lost someone close to you, and you think it's your fault. You're frustrated, and you don't know what to do," Rae said.

>"How do you..."
"I was the same way once. I was only eight when my first mom died...she left her prized earrings with me the last time I saw her. I thought it was my fault that she died because I didn't refuse them. I beat myself into the ground, and my other mom was hit hard too. But she helped me back up.

>"Everything was great for a while; I got accepted into a prestigious combat school in Atlas, was top of my class, then got accepted into Haven. I met Sakura and the rest of my team, and I felt as if things were finally okay again.
"Then...then..." Rae wiped some tears from her eyes.

>"When Sakura was gravely injured, my hand was cut off, and all I wanted to her was my mom's voice, it turns out she her gunship had crashed. There was no recovering of the body.
"But now here I am, a fully fledged huntress, with my partner badly injured again, at a complete stranger's house, talking to his daughter. That's my story, now I want to hear yours."

>"My mom, well, not my real mom, but still my mom, died when Ruby and I were young-"
"Wait, Ruby...that name sounds familiar. Do you know anyone by the name of Weiss?" Rae asked.

>"Yeah, why do you ask?"
"Well, when Saki and I were in Beacon, we found a note from the person who dragged us into their dorm and helped us. We never saw her, but we owe her our lives. The note was for a Yang, and mentioned a Ruby and a Weiss. I think I have it-"

>"I don't want to read it," Yang interrupted, falling back into her depression "I don't care about her anymore."
"She's sorry."

>"If she was sorry she would have stayed with me."
"She was scared that in staying around you it would make you a target."

>"I..."
"She feels as through she's responsible for what happened, and wanted to help you any way she could. So she thought that by giving you space and time to recover, and keeping whoever wants to hurt you occupied, that you could survive."
>"Hey...I don't even know who you are, but thanks. Thanks for telling me that."
"Anytime. The name's Rae. If you ever need anyone to talk to, just call. Your dad should have my number."
>Rae got up and left the room, and saw something on Yang's face, something she once needed.
A smile.

It was near midnight later that day. Rae was in bed with her partner, and felt her stir. She turned over to find Sakura attempting to sit up.

>"Sakura! Don't move! You need to rest!" Rae whispered.
"Rae? What? Why are we whispering? And where are we?" Sakura replied.

>"We're at someone's house who graciously let us use one of their beds, and we're whispering because there are other people in this house who are sleeping!"
The girls stayed still for a moment their eyes locked.

>"I...suppose I owe you an explanation. Where do you want me to start?" Sakura asked.
"How about the fact that you have fucking wings that you never told any of us about?"

>"Only my sister and my mom knows about this. Not even my dad knows. Hell, they don't even know that I know. It was only cleared up for me recently.
"I'm not actually human, or a faunus. I'm actually a Grimm."

>Sakura stopped to let it sink in, but it didn't seem to.
"You're kidding right? You can't be a Grimm; you have an aura and a semblance, you have a soul. Grimm don't have souls, and there are no Grimm that look like people!"

>"You'd be right. It's not actually my own aura or my own semblance. They're from this charm my old sensei gave me when I was a kid. She's also the one who helped me realize what I am.
"And that thing about blood from a few days ago? It was about my blood. Dragon Grimm blood. And the urge to just kill. I'm not to sure how I got to be who I am, but I'm a creature of Grimm, a monster-"

>"No, you're not."
Rae's snappy reply caught Saki off guard.

>"You're not a monster. A monster doesn't decide to dedicate their lives to being a huntress. A monster doesn't risk their own life to save another's. A monster doesn't have a cute little faunus girlfriend."
"You're taking this surprisingly well."

>"Why wouldn't I? You're my partner and the love of my life. I don't care what you are. It's who you are that matters."
"I...I really don't know what to say. I thought you would have either not believed me and laughed this off, or run me off."

>"Then don't say anything," Rae said, pecking her partner on the lips, "you're the only thing I've got left. And if it means that I'm in the same bed as a Grimm, I don't care. Now, come on. We both need our sleep."<p>

End
file.